

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 8-13, 16, 21 and 32 pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claims 1 and 3-6 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sjostrom (U.S. Patent No. 3,911,604). Claims 1-6 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Wiebesiek (U.S. Patent No. 4, 501,529) or Weir (U.S. Patent No. 5,333,402). Claims 8-11, 18, 19, 21-23 and 27-29 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 102 (a or e) as being anticipated by Nakamura (U.S. Patent No. 6,584,711). Claims 8-11, 13, 14 and 18-21 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 102 (a or e) as being anticipated by Takahashi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,477,797). Claims 8 and 14-16 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ueda et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,169,282). Claim 31 was allowed. Claims 12 and 32 were indicated as allowable if amended to overcome the rejection pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 112. Claims 2, 17, 24-26 and 30 were objected to as allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejections of claims 1-6, 8-11, 13-16, 18-23, 27-30 and 32, including independent claims 1, 8, 14, 18, 23, 27 and 32.

35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph:

Claim 8 has been amended without narrowing the claim to replace "apparatus" with "method." Claim 21 has been amended for proper antecedent basis, but claim 16 is believed to be correct (see line 1 of claim 16). Claim 32 has been amended by deleting the clamping of the first corner in act (e).

Sjostrom:

Independent claim 1 claims two clamps operable to clamp on one side of the conveyor centerline and both clamps move to the other side of the centerline while clamping. When rotated open for placement of the laundry by the user, the clamps 29 and 30 are on one side of the centerline (see Fig. 1). The clamps 29 and 30 move in an arc to position one clamp 29 on the other side of the centerline, but the other clamp 30 remains on the same side of the centerline (see Fig. 2; Col. 3, lines 25-40). Sjostrom pivots the clamps to a conveyor loading

position straddling the centerline, so does not suggest moving both clamps from one side to the other side of the centerline.

Wiebesiek:

Independent claim 1 claims clamps operable to clamp on one side and both clamps move to the other side of a centerline while clamping. Wiebesiek showing clamping by both clamps on one side (see Fig. 2). To spread the laundry, one clamp is positioned on the other side (see Fig. 3; Col. 3, lines 42-44). While the trailing clamp is dragged by the moving clamp, the trailing clamp does not also cross to the other side (Col. 3, lines 44-50). Wiebesiek clamp on one side, but then only center the laundry around the centerline (Col. 3, lines 47-50 and Col. 4, lines 57-59). Both clamps do not move to other side while clamping.

Weir:

Independent claim 1 claims clamps operable to clamp on one side and both clamps operable to move to the other side of the centerline while clamping. Weir shows three loading stations 18 (left side, center, right side (Fig. 1)). Two clamps 28 are both operable to move to any station for clamping (see Figs. 14, 15 and 16). However, once clamped at any station, the clamps spread the laundry to be centered on the centerline (see Figs. 14-16). While both clamps are capable of moving to either side of the centerline, only one clamp crosses the centerline while clamping the laundry, not both.

Nakamura:

Independent claim 8 claims displacing in one direction two locations while clamped at both locations, releasing one location and displacing the other location in an opposite direction after the release. Nakamura clamps the laundry with nipping rollers 4 to find and clamp a corner with clamp 6 (Col. 9, lines 50-59). The nipping rollers 4 then rotate so another clamp 7 may clamp a trailing corner (Col. 9, lines 60 - Col. 10, line 3). The displacement off the clamps 6 and 7 is not until the nipping rollers have released the laundry (Col. 10, lines 4-14). The clamps 6 and 7 are then spread apart (Col. 10, lines 6-14) and move until released (Col. 10,

lines 24-51). Nakamura does not disclose moving two clamped locations in one direction, releasing one of the locations and then moving the other location backwards (i.e. in the opposite direction).

Independent claim 18 claims conveying the laundry on a surface of a conveyor, sensing a trailing corner and pinching the trailing corner against the surface of the conveyor. Nakamura uses clamps 6 and 7 to move the laundry over a mounting stand 8 (Col. 10, lines 24-51).

Nakamura does not disclose a conveyor in the cited embodiment. Once the edge is found, Nakamura clamps the article with a dual clamp 11 and moves the laundry off the mounting stand (Col. 10, lines 45-60). Nakamura does not pinch the trailing corner against a conveyor surface.

Independent claim 23 claims a clamp operable to clamp a bunch of the article of laundry and a clamp operable to clamp an edge while suspended from a corner and the bunch.

Independent claim 27 claims similar operation in a method claim. Nakamura uses clamps 6 and 7 to clamp corners, not a bunch or gathered portion of the article. The edge is gripped while resting on a mounting surface (Co. 10, lines 45-57). Nakamura does not disclose gripping the edge while the article is suspended from a bunch.

Takahaski:

Independent claim 8 claims clamping at two locations, displacing both clamped locations in a same direction, releasing one location and displacing the other location in an opposite direction after release. The clamps 21 and 31 merely alter an axis of movement from up (clamp 21) to horizontal (clamp 31) (Col. 4, lines 5-19). Neither of the clamps 21 and 31 of Takahashi act to displace the article in a same direction while clamped. Neither one of the clamps 21 and 31 carry the article in one direction and then in an opposite direction. Likewise for clamps 71 and 72, 45 and 51.

Independent claim 14 claims a conveyor and a jaw operable to press against the article on the conveyor. Similarly, claim 18 claims pinching the article against a surface of a conveyor. Takahashi show pressing the article against a plate or support 43 (Col. 5, lines 4-10

and 31-37). The support is not a conveyor, so Takahashi does not disclose pressing or pinching the article against the surface of the conveyor.

Ueda:

Independent claim 8 claims displacing the clamped locations in a same direction, releasing one location and displacing the other location (Fig. 1). The only two clamps displaced in a same direction while clamped are clamps 8, 9; 10, 11 and 12, 13. None of these clamps then moves in an opposite direction while clamped.

Independent claim 14 claims a jaw operable to press against an article on a conveyor. Ueda uses clamps in rails to move the laundry, so does not disclose a jaw that presses against an article on a conveyor.

The dependent claims depend from the independent claims, so are allowable for the same reasons. For brevity, the dependent claims are not further detailed. Limitations of the dependent claims distinguish over the references and may be later relied upon.

CONCLUSION:

Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are in condition for allowance and seeks early allowance thereof. If for any reason, the Examiner is unable to allow the application but believes that an interview would be helpful to resolve any issues, he is respectfully requested to call the undersigned at (312) 321-4726.

Respectfully submitted,



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